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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 384th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 15 April 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. AFONSO (Mozambique)

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN declared the session open.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

2. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN said that it was necessary to elect a new Chairman as a result of Mr. Perera's departure. He proposed the election of the new Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, Mr. Kalpage. He was confident that the candidate's valuable experience and personal qualities would help to ensure the success of the Committee's work.

3. Mr. Kalpage (Sri Lanka) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

4. Mr. Kalpage (Chairman) took the Chair.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.159/L.107)

5. The agenda was adopted.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

6. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the following text, which had been adopted in previous years, should continue to apply in the course of the Ad Hoc Committee's work during 1991:

> "It has been decided that the Ad Hoc Committee, in recognition of its preparatory functions, will meet in formal and informal sessions, as it considers appropriate, to complete the organizational and substantive preparatory work relating to the Conference on the Indian Ocean. In so doing, adequate time will be given to both organizational and substantive issues, including the provisional agenda for the Conference, rules of procedure, participation, stages of the Conference, level of representation, documentation, consideration of appropriate arrangements for any international agreements that may ultimately be reached for the maintenance of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and preparation of the draft final document of the Conference.
>
> "For the consideration of substantive issues, the Committee will take into account, inter alia, the political and security climate in the region and characteristics of the zone as given in documents placed before the Committee or discussed during the session. The Committee will also give consideration to all other documents before it.
>
> "It has been decided further that the open-ended Working Group will continue to meet during the scheduled sessions of the Committee with a

(The Chairman)

mandate to identify, expand and facilitate agreement on substantive issues relating to the establishment of a zone of peace with a view to, inter alia, recommending to the Ad Hoc Committee elements that might be taken into consideration during the subsequent preparation of a draft final document of the United Nations Conference on the Indian Ocean. Meetings of the Committee and the open-ended Working Group will not take place concurrently."

7. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt that text.

8. It was so decided.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

9. The CHAIRMAN, referring to the important changes that had occurred in international relations in recent years, which had also had an impact on the work of the Committee, said that the Indian Ocean was an area that was important for economic development and shipping. The Indian Ocean also included what had been described in the Committee as its "natural extensions". One of them was the Gulf area, which had experienced conflict and instability in the past year. He expressed satisfaction at the acceptance by all concerned of the political and other advantages of working within the framework of the United Nations.

10. Even though changes had occurred in the international political atmosphere, the implementation of the "zone of peace" concept in various parts of the world might still be a valid approach towards achieving a global system of peace and security.

11. The Committee had been meeting on a regular basis since 1972 and had been responsive to changes occurring both in the Indian Ocean and globally. In 1979, the Meeting of Littoral and Hinterland States of the Indian Ocean, held under the auspices of the United Nations, had considered ways and means of implementing the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. The Meeting had also discussed important principles that were also set forth in the Charter. Those principles included the non-use of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

12. With regard to the preparatory work for the Conference on the Indian Ocean, the General Assembly had, in resolution 45/77, requested the Ad Hoc Committee to complete the remaining work so that the Conference could be convened in Colombo in 1992 in consultation with the host country.

13. He noted with regret the non-participation of some of the Committee's members in its work and the withdrawal of three permanent members of the Security Council. Efforts should continue to be made to bring those members back, and the reasons which had led to the withdrawal of some members needed

(The Chairman)

to be carefully addressed. Towards that end, he intended to hold consultations with the delegations concerned before the summer session in the hope of persuading them of the necessity of their rejoining the Committee, since the participation of those delegations was very important for the success of the Committee's endeavours.

14. The holding of a conference and the adoption of a document by it would not mark the end of the process of strengthening peace and security within a zone of peace. On the contrary, it would be just the beginning of such a process.

15. It was expected that the Colombo Conference would adopt a document reaffirming important principles for the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean. The Conference would give necessary political impetus for reaching a definition of the concepts underlying the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and would also reaffirm the rights guaranteed to States under international law.

16. The previous year the Committee had adopted the provisional agenda of the Conference and had considered the rules of procedure. The Committee had also had before it a report by the Chairman of the Working Group identifying 19 elements which were set out in the appendix to document A/AC.159/L.93. In accordance with the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, the Committee should make every effort to conclude all its preparatory work. It should continue its consideration of substantive issues and make every effort to reach consensus on those provisions of the rules of procedure not adopted at the summer session in 1990. The Committee could, if necessary, identify any areas on which agreement was not possible and refer them to the Conference for consideration and final decision. Members should also continue their consultations even outside the framework of the Ad Hoc Committee so as to build confidence and create a climate conducive to the achievement of the objectives of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

17. The CHAIRMAN read out the proposed programme of work and drew the attention of members to a letter dated 19 February 1991 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, in which attention was drawn to the underutilization by the Ad Hoc Committee of the conference-servicing resources made available to it. He recalled the provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/238 urging all organs and bodies to intensify their efforts to improve their utilization of requested conference-servicing resources. Accordingly, he suggested that, taking practical considerations into account and in the interests of saving time, it would be desirable to devote the second half of the day to informal consultations.

18. Ms. COURTNEY (Australia) proposed that the informal consultations should continue to be open-ended so that all interested delegations could take part in them.

19. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12 noon

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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 385th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 16 April 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

CONTENTS

General debate

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, at its morning meeting the day before, the Committee had decided to hold informal consultations the previous afternoon. When members of the Committee had gathered for the meeting, the representative of Sri Lanka, on behalf of the non-aligned countries, had requested him, as Chairman, to cancel the informal consultations. Since the decision to hold the informal consultations had been taken by the Committee as a whole, a decision by the entire Committee was required to cancel the consultations. Accordingly, it had been agreed that the informal consultations should proceed in accordance with the earlier decision. In view of the absence of a number of delegations, the representatives of Uganda, China and Mauritius had proposed the postponement of the consultations, and a decision to that effect was taken. The representative of Sri Lanka, speaking on behalf of the non-aligned States, had proposed that the members of the Committee should be given an opportunity to make statements in the general debate even outside the times set aside for that purpose in the approved programme of work. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the members of the Committee agreed to the proposal.

2. It was so decided.

3. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that he concurred in the Chairman's view that the "zone of peace" concept remained the most promising approach to the achievement of comprehensive peace and security. The Conference on the Indian Ocean should be held the following year, as scheduled. The Conference would be a positive step towards the attainment of the Committee's objectives.

4. Although the Committee's forward movement had been undeniably slow, several events along the way pointed to steady progress. Thus, important elements of regional security, some of which were enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, had been considered at the Meeting of Littoral and Hinterland States of the Indian Ocean held in 1979.

5. It would be naive, however, not to recognize that there were still obstacles that had to be overcome. One of the most important was the absence from the Committee of several key members. In the view of his delegation, those members must return to the Committee. No one was casting doubt on their commitment to the Committee's goals; while there had been differences, none was so fundamental as to justify a complete break.

6. Bangladesh was among those countries which had joined hands with those States in an effort to deal with the crisis in the Gulf. Such cooperation demonstrated that the cause of peace and security was best served when nations acted in concert. Similar positive results could also be achieved in the Indian Ocean area where the current situation offered favourable conditions for a collective approach in the quest for stability.

(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

7. Endorsing the programme of work proposed by the Chairman, he noted that the 19 points set forth in document A/AC.159/L.93 provided a good basis for the Committee's deliberations for progress in its work.

8. Mr. OVANESOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, in spite of the great complexity of the events currently taking place in the Indian Ocean area, the Committee was meeting at a very favourable juncture, which was characterized by a transition from the balance of power and reliance on arms to a balance of interests and a collective security structure as the basis for stability. The qualitatively different international situation called for the efforts of the Ad Hoc Committee to be transposed to the plane of dialogue and constructive cooperation on the basis of the objectives set forth in the 1971 Declaration.

9. The United Nations experience in dealing with the crisis in the Persian Gulf far transcended the limits of that region. It had been a watershed of sorts in the activities of the Organization, demonstrating its capacity not only to condemn an aggressor but also to take effective measures to put an end to the aggression.

10. Disarmament and the settlement of regional conflicts were becoming effective means for ensuring security in all its aspects, and that should have a salutary influence on the situation not only in the Persian Gulf but also in the Indian Ocean area as a whole.

11. Unfortunately, a number of Western countries, without whose constructive involvement it would be unrealistic to speak of the implementation of any practical measures for the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, were still not taking part in the work of the Committee. However, the absence of those countries must not hamper active efforts to seek practical decisions. It was therefore to be hoped that the representatives of those countries would consider the possibility of returning to the Committee and participating in its action-oriented and purposeful work.

12. Since his delegation considered the Ad Hoc Committee to be one of the means for the practical achievement of regional security in the Indian Ocean area, it not only favoured the Committee's continued existence, but also took the view that the Committee's activities must be given a new impetus through decisions that were in keeping with the spirit of the new era. His delegation proposed that the Committee should begin at the current session to concentrate on working out a realistic approach to the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, taking into account both current circumstances and the objectives set forth in the 1971 Declaration.

13. His delegation continued to support the convening of the Conference on the Indian Ocean, and believed that the draft agreement to be adopted to reinforce in the juridical sphere the objectives of the 1971 United Nations

(Mr. Ovanesov, USSR)

Declaration should include provisions on the obligations of both littoral States and major users of the Indian Ocean, including the five permanent members of the Security Council.

14. The region of Asia and the Pacific was a major focus of Soviet foreign policy. In its approach to the problem of the Indian Ocean, the Soviet Union would be guided, inter alia, by the well-known Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk initiatives. It also believed that the region had a wealth of original ideas to offer and was prepared to listen carefully to them.

15. In considering the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, account must be taken of the creation of a system of security in the Persian Gulf, as a part of that region which had its own distinctive features. In that connection, he drew the attention of the members of the Committee to the Soviet Union's comments on a post-crisis settlement in the Persian Gulf area in document S/22392.

16. With regard to the future work of the Ad Hoc Committee, the dramatic events in the Persian Gulf would make it necessary to take a fresh look at substantive issues. The issues in question were the basic elements of the concept of the declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and ways and means and the programme of action for completing work on an international agreement and adopting other practical measures for the transformation of the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace. It was to be hoped that an in-depth exchange of views on that subject could be held at the current session.

17. The questions and principles contained in the informal list drawn up by the Chairman of the Working Group (A/AC.159/L.93) also needed further study. At the preceding session, the Soviet delegation had proposed that, on the basis of that document, a draft agreement should be prepared for submission to the Conference, and had set forth the reasons for its proposal. The Soviet Union hoped that delegations would have an opportunity to consider and state their views on its proposal, in the light of recent events in the region.

18. The CHAIRMAN said that, since there were no further speakers on his list, he wished to invite members of the Committee to state their views on how the Committee should proceed with its work.

19. Mr. JAIN (India) suggested that the Committee might wish to hold the informal consultations which it had not held the preceding day and which would expedite its work.

20. With regard to the Chairman's statement at the beginning of the meeting concerning the request from a number of delegations to postpone the informal consultations, he acknowledged that the proposal had placed the Committee in an awkward position which, unfortunately, could not have been foreseen earlier owing to a number of circumstances.

21. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of India had suggested that the Committee should adjourn the formal meeting in order to hold informal consultations. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to proceed in that manner.

22. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.